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AUTHOR Olsen, Roger E.; McCall, Zaida
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ABSTRACT

A study examined the characteristics of 14 students entering the American school system as non-English-speaking adolescents, yet achieving the level of academic content learning and English language proficiency to earn a high school diploma. The subjects of the study were classified in grade 12 as speaking a language other than English at home and also as limited-English-proficient (LEP). These LEP students had entered the United States at an average age of 14 years 6 months, and entered the school system at an average age of 15 years 2 months. The population received English as a second language (ESL) and bilingual program services for an average of a little over seven quarters. All were fluent and literate in their first languages. The students achieved gains in English language proficiency and nearly a fifth-grade equivalency on three reading and basic skills tests. The LEP students graduated in almost the same proportion as fully English-proficient (FEP) students, and several LEP students required more than one additional year of high school to earn their diplomas. Other findings include: entry level placement may be associated with English language gains and academic achievement, and early and intensive ESL instruction may be more effective for non-English-speakers than for students who speak some English on arrival. (MSE)

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LEP / FEP Graduation Ratios

Roger E. Olsen
Alemany Press

Zaida McCall
Hayward Unified School District

California Association for Bilingual Education
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for her invaluable assistance in collecting the data presented here.

Focus. This study examined characteristics of students acquiring English who entered the American schooling system as non-English speaking adolescents (n=14) and, seemingly against all odds, achieved the level of success with academic content learning and English language acquisition necessary to earn a High School diploma. These students were classified limited English proficient (LEP) at graduation. LEP students graduated in nearly the same proportion (31%) as FEP students (36%) and several LEP students required more than one "fifth year" of high school in order to earn their diplomas.

Background. There is considerable discussion about what students acquiring English need in order to succeed in American schools, particularly in terms of the length of time and the special instructional services in order to succeed in "regular" academic classrooms. The evidence is that a great deal of time and extensive instructional services are necessary. Three to five years are necessary for full development of "basic interpersonal communication

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skills (BICS)" in English and five to eight years are necessary for full development of "cognitive academic language proficiencies (CALP)" in English (Cummins, 1981; Krashen & Biber, 1988; Collier, 1987).

Factors frequently reported as affecting educational outcomes with language minority students usually include the following (partial listing): Age at entry into the US, Time in the US school system, Primary language literacy, Previous formal education, ESL and Bilingual services available, trained staff, supportive administration, etc. (Willig, 1985). Krashen and Biber (1988) observe that when bilingual education and ESL programs work well, they can work very well. Students acquiring English may actually outperform native English speaking students on standardized achievement tests such as the CTBS and the CAP tests, at least in part because skills developed in a primary, first, language transfer to the second language.

Recent studies also emphasize the importance of cognitive skills development such as cognitive strategies (Chamot and O'Malley, 1987) and using second language for academic purposes (Collier, 1987). Collier's data indicate however that adolescents entering the American schooling system as non-English speakers between the ages of 12 and 15 experience the greatest difficulty acquiring English language and the "cognitive academic language proficiencies (CALP) necessary for successful participation in regular "mainstream" academic programs, perhaps because cognitive and academic development may be postponed while English language proficiencies are being developed.

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Adolescents entering American schooling as non-English speakers are therefore at a severe disadvantage. They can ill afford to wait five to eight years for full development of cognitive and academic language proficiencies in order to participate in secondary schooling. The implication is that unless they receive exceptional instructional and support services, they may be destined to fail.

However, Krashen and Biber's surveys and Collier's data use standardized achievement test scores as criterion measures of academic and English language achievement. We question whether it is appropriate to use achievement test scores as the only criterion measure of the effectiveness of instructional services utilized by adolescent students acquiring English. A central goal of secondary education is the High School Diploma. Performance on standardized achievement tests at the 80th percentile, for example, is a demanding standard which exceeds the minimum competencies that are sufficient to earn a High School Diploma.

High school diplomas **are** being awarded to students who entered American schooling as non-English speaking adolescents. This study focuses on some characteristics of these students, students who entered American schooling as non-English speaking adolescents and earned high school diplomas.

Setting. Subjects were drawn from a Semi-Urban school system (K-12 population approximately 18,000). 31% of all K-12 students report they speak

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a language other than English (SLOTE) and 15% of all students district-wide are identified limited English proficient (LEP). At the secondary level, grades 7-12, 15% are identified LEP and 17.7% are classified Fluent English Proficient (FEP). The number of students who SLOTE has increased from 4100 in April 1982 to 5600 in April 1988. The number of identified LEP increased during the same period from 2200 to 2700. More than 34 languages are represented in the student body, including Spanish, Farsi, Dari, Pashto, Vietnamese, Tagalog, Chinese, Hindi, Portuguese and Korean having fifty or more speakers.

Subjects. The subjects had been identified "limited English proficient (LEP)" upon entering the American schooling system as adolescents. Most of these students were subsequently placed in regular, "mainstream" academic classes.

Procedure. All subjects were identified though school language census data as 12th graders who met three criteria: First, they were identified as speaking a language other than English (SLOTE) at home. Second, they were identified as limited English proficient (LEP) and participated in the District's ESL program. Third, they had amassed sufficient units to be eligible or nearly eligible to graduate during the 1987-88 school year. Entry records were then examined and the available data analyzed.

Characteristics. Fourteen students in one high school met the study's criteria, from a population of 154 twelfth grade-age students who report

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speaking a language other than English (SLOTE) at home. There were fifty-four total whose academic standing implied that they were eligible or nearly eligible to graduate. Forty of these had been classified Full English Proficient (FEP) at entry and did not receive specialized English language instruction. These data are summarized in Table One.

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Table One
Student Body

Group/Sub-group Description	SENIOR AGE GROUP N	%	ALL SCHOOL N	%
Total Enrollment	317	100.0%	1292	100.0%
Students who SLOTE*	154	48.6%	454	35.1%
Currently Identified LEP*	45	14.2%	209	16.2%
Classified FEP*	111	35.0%	245	19.0%
Students who SLOTE who are eligible or nearly eligible to graduate	54	100.0%		
Classified FEP at Entry	40	74.1%		
Identified LEP at Entry	14	29.9%		

* SLOTE: Speak a Language Other Than English
* LEP: Limited English Proficient
* FEP: Fluent English Proficient

Notice that 40 of 111 or 36% senior-age FEP and 14 of 45 or 31% senior-age LEP students are eligible or nearly eligible to graduate. These ratios suggest that the LEP students utilized available services to produce graduation outcomes similar to those who were not eligible for specialized instruction in English. It is also relevant to note that the 14 graduating LEP students had not been formally re-classified FEP at graduation. Perhaps the criteria used for classification at entry diminish in importance through time.

Entry data describing the 14 LEP students is summarized here in Table Two, showing ages in decimal years at entry to the USA and into the school, amount of previous schooling in the student's first language in years completed, entry L1 literacy (an informal 0-to-3 rating), and entry level of English proficiency as estimated by performance on the Language Assessment Scale (LAS). Gender, first language and entry level placement were also recorded. It should be noted that these data are not

comprehensive; that is, all data were not available for all students in all categories.

Table Two also shows data recorded on each student at Exit into the "mainstream," including number of quarters of attendance in the ESL program (ESL Qtrs) where they received three periods of ESL and some first language support, exit level of English proficiency as measured by performance on the LAS, performance on the Gates-McGinite Reading test stated in Grade Equivalency (GE), and GE scores on the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills (CTBS) for reading and for language.

Table Two:
Characteristics of 14 FEPS at Entry and Exit
Students from one high school who were non-English speaking adolescents upon entry into American schooling

	Entry Age (USA)	Entry Age (ESL)	Exit Age (ESL)	First Language Schooling (years)	Entry L1 Literacy	Level Pre-LAS	ESL Qtrs	Level Post-LAS	GATES Exit GE	CTBS Reading GE	CTBS Language GE
Ns	14	14	14	11	14	13	14	13	14	14	14
Means	14.56	15.12	16.86	7.64	2.00	1.38	7.29	2.92	4.50	5.24	4.69
S.Ds	2.07	1.70	1.43	1.21	0.68	0.65	3.77	0.64	1.10	1.46	1.23

Findings. The data in Table Two summarize this survey's findings about students who entered American schooling as limited or non-English speaking adolescents. These students entered the USA at an average age of nearly 14 years 6 months and they entered this district an average of nine months later, at age 15 years two months. They received ESL and bilingual program services for an average of 7.29 quarters, exiting the program at an average age of 16 years ten months.

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All 14 students had achieved at least a sixth grade level of schooling in their first language, with an average of 7.64 years of schooling and were considered to be fluent and literate in their first languages. Their English language proficiency, although low, was not non-existent as measured by the LAS with an average LAS pre-test level mean of 1.38.

These students received nearly eight quarters of ESL and bilingual support provided by the district (average of 7.29 quarters enrollment) and achieved gains in their LAS level and achieved nearly a fifth grade grade equivalency on three standardized tests, the Gates-McGinite Reading test and two CTBS tests.

Other findings. Table Three shows raw scores of all fourteen pupils grouped according to gender and suggests that males may (a) tend to exit the program two quarters earlier than females, (b) show larger LAS gains, and (c) show higher GE scores on CTBS Reading. The differences are not presented here as statistically significant differences. Table Three also indicates the students' first languages and their placement level of A, B, C, or D in the ESL program upon enrollment.

Insert Table Three (Gender Grouping) about here

Table 3 - Gender Groupings

Sex	First Language	Entry Age (USA)	Entry Age (ESL)	Exit Age (ESL)	First Language Schooling	Entry L1 Literacy	Level Pre LAS	Entry Placement Level	ESL Quarters	Level Post LAS	GATES Exit GE	CTBS GE 9 Exit Reading	CTBS GE - Exit Lang
F	Arabic	16.5	16.8	18		2		C	6		3.5	3.4	4.5
F	Dari	11.8	12.1	15.8	6	1	1	A	16	3	5.6	5.7	3.6
F	Dari	15.3	15.5	17.3	7	3	1	A	8	3	4.6	4.5	4.1
F	Dari	14.1	15.4	17.1	6	2	1	B	12	2	3.8	4.1	3.5
F	Dari	14.9	15	15.7	8	2	2	C	4	3	6.7	5	5.5
F	Pashto	17.5	18.1	20.3	9	2	1	B	8	3	3.5	5.3	3.2
F	Vietnamese	10.8	12.5	15	8	2	2	C	4	2	3.7	4.9	8
	Mean	14.4	15.1	17.0	7.3	2.0	1.3		8.3	2.7	4.5	4.7	4.6
	Stand Dev.	2.41	2.16	1.78	1.21	0.58	0.52		4.39	0.52	1.24	0.77	1.67
	Number	7	7	7	6	7	6		7	6	7	7	7
M	Farsi	16.1	16.2	17.3	9	3	1	C	5	3	5.4	5.7	4.6
M	Farsi	15.9	15.9	16.5	9	2	2	B	3	3	5.8	5	5.1
M	Farsi	14	14.2	17.9		2	1	A	11	4	3.8	5.5	3.6
M	Spanish	11.2	13.5	14.7	6	1	3	D	6	3	5.2	3.3	5.4
M	Spanish	13.9	14	16.3	8	1	1	A	10	3	0	4.7	4.1
M	Vietnamese	15.2	15.7	16.4	8	2	1	B	4	2	5.2	7.3	5.1
M	Vietnamese	16.6	16.8	17.8		3	1	B	5	4	6.2	8.9	5.3
	Mean	14.7	15.2	16.7	8.0	2.0	1.4		6.3	3.1	4.5	5.8	4.7
	Stand Dev	1.85	1.27	1.10	1.2	0.82	0.79		3.04	0.69	2.13	1.83	0.68
	Number	7	7	7	5	7	7		7	7	7	7	7
TOTAL													
MEANS		14.6	15.1	16.9	7.6	2.0	1.4		7.3	2.9	4.5	5.2	4.7
Stand Devs		2.07	1.7	1.43	1.21	0.68	0.65		3.77	0.6	1.1	1.46	1.23
NUMBERS		14.0	14.0	14.0	11.0	14.0	13.0		14.0	13.0	14.0	14.0	14.0

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Table Four shows these data summarized according to Entry Level Placement. These data suggest that Entry Level Placement may be associated with English Language Proficiency gains and with academic achievement. That is, Level A students improved their LAS level from a mean of 1 to a mean of 3.25 and Level A and Level B students had higher GE scores on the CTBS and the Gates-McGinite Reading test than did students who were initially placed into Levels C and D. These results if generalizable warrant discussion and invite the speculations (a) that Level A and Level B students were exposed to and participated in more English language and academic "socialization" while participating in the ESL/Bilingual program prior to exiting the program and/or (b) that early and intensive ESL instruction may be more effective for non-English speakers than for those who have some English language ability upon arrival.

Insert Table Four (Entry Level Placement) about here

Level of previous schooling in the student's first language does not appear to be associated with academic success in English with this sample (Table Five). Previous schooling may not be a strong predictor of academic achievement or of English language gains once past initial language and cultural literacy.

Insert Table Five (Previous Schooling) about here

Table 4: Entry Level Placement

Entry Placement Level		Entry Age (USA)	Entry Age (ESL)	Exit Age (ESL)	First Language Schooling	Entry L1 Literacy	Level Pre LAS	ESL Qtrs	Level Post LAS	GATES Exit GE	CTBS Exit GE Reading	CTBS Exit GE Lang
A	Means	13.75	13.95	16.83	7.00	1.75	1.00	11.25	3.25	3.50	5.10	3.85
	Stand Dev.	1.45	1.40	0.95	1.00	0.96	0.00	3.40	0.50	2.45	0.59	0.29
	Ns	4	4	4	3	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
B	Means	15.86	16.38	17.62	8.00	2.20	1.20	6.40	2.80	4.90	6.12	4.44
	Stand Dev	1.30	1.09	1.60	1.41	0.45	0.45	3.65	0.84	1.20	1.94	1.00
	Ns	5	5	5	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
C	Means	14.58	15.13	16.50	8.33	2.25	1.67	4.75	2.67	4.83	4.75	5.65
	Stand Dev.	2.61	1.90	1.39	0.58	0.50	0.58	0.96	0.58	1.51	0.97	1.63
	Ns	4	4	4	3	4	3	4	3	4	4	4
D	n=1	11.2	13.5	14.7	6	1	3	6	3	5.2	3.3	5.4

Table 5: Years Previous Schooling

Years Previous Schooling		Entry Age (USA)	Entry Age (ESL)	Exit Age (ESL)	Entry L1 Literacy	Level Pre LAS	ESL Qtrs	Level Post LAS	GATES Exit GE	CTBS Exit GE Reading	CTBS Exit GE Lang
6 years	Means	12.4	13.7	15.9	1.3	1.7	11.3	2.7	4.9	4.4	4.2
	Ns	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
7 years	n=1	15.3	15.5	17.3	3.0	1.0	8.0	3.0	4.6	4.5	4.1
8 years	Means	13.7	14.3	15.9	1.8	1.5	5.5	2.5	3.9	5.5	5.7
	Ns	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
9 years	Means	16.5	16.7	18.0	2.3	1.3	5.3	3.0	4.9	5.3	4.3
	Ns	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3

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English language proficiency as measured by performance level on the LAS may be most strongly associated with the number of quarters of ESL the student subsequently receives and does not appear to be associated with academic achievement in this survey. Table Six shows raw and mean scores for the students grouped according to entry level LAS level.

Insert Table Six (Pre-LAS Levels) about here

Table Seven shows these data organized according to students ages: graduation and entry ages (entry to the USA, entry to the District, and entry to ESL ages) as well as exit age or age of exit from the ESL program. Graduation age was derived from recorded dates of birth and the high school's graduation date. Many students required a "fifth year" of high school and several of these required more than one "fifth year."

Insert Table Seven (Ages) about here

Conclusions. Very few generalizations may be drawn from these data, especially inferences about which of these characteristics may have a predictive value for identifying what services are appropriate for which

Table 6: Pre-LAS Levels

Pre-Las Level		Level Pre LAS	Entry Age (USA)	Entry Age (ESL)	Exit Age (ESL)	First Language Schooling	Entry L1 Literacy	ESL Quarters	Level Post LAS	GATES Exit GE	CTBS Exit GE Reading	CTBS Exit GE Lang
1	Means	1.00	14.94	15.33	17.36	7.57	2.11	8.78	3.00	4.23	5.74	4.12
	Stand Devs	0.00	1.71	1.74	1.31	1.27	0.78	3.90	0.71	1.84	1.50	0.74
	N	9	9	9	9	7	9	9	9	9	9	9
2	Means	2.00	13.87	14.47	15.73	8.33	2.00	3.67	2.67	5.40	4.97	6.20
	Stand Devs	0.00	2.70	1.76	0.75	0.58	0.00	0.58	0.58	1.54	0.06	1.57
	Ns	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
3	n=1	3	11.2	13.5	14.7	6	1	6	3	5.2	3.3	5.4

Table 7: Ages

Graduation Age		Entry Age (USA)	Entry Age (Dist)	Entry Age (ESL)	Exit Age (ESL)	ESL Quarters	First Language Schooling	Entry L1 Literacy	Level Pre LAS	Level Post LAS	GATES Exit GE	CTBS Exit GE Reading
18.3	Mean	12.97	13.68	13.75	16.17	8.67	7.40	1.67	1.50	3.00	3.95	4.97
6	N	6	6	6	6	6	5	6	6	6	6	6
0.25	SD	2.05	1.52	1.46	1.26	4.55	1.34	0.82	0.84	0.63	2.10	0.92
19.5	Mean	15.73	15.98	15.98	17.05	5.25	6.00	2.25	1.33	2.67	4.78	5.05
4	N	4	4	4	4	4	3	4	3	3	4	4
0.17	SD	0.60	0.57	0.57	0.75	2.22	1.00	0.50	0.58	0.58	0.98	1.64
20.8	Mean	15.78	16.15	16.33	17.73	7.25	7.67	2.25	1.25	3.00	5.05	5.83
4	N	4	4	4	4	4	3	4	4	4	4	4
0.55	SD	1.55	1.81	1.41	1.93	3.59	1.53	0.50	0.50	0.82	1.63	2.11

students. There are two findings in this study the researchers consider important. The first major finding is that LEP students graduated in nearly the same proportion (31%) as FEP students (36%). This suggests that the available services were utilized effectively to bring the LEP students nearly at par with the FEP students. The second important finding is that several students required at least one "fifth year" of high school in order to earn their diplomas.

Given the extremely small sample in this survey, inferences drawn from this survey are highly speculative and at most only indicate areas for further study. The findings are therefore reported cautiously. Nevertheless, the investigators are impressed that so much data are maintained within the district that can be organized and reported in ways that contribute systematically to instructional planning.

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Please direct correspondence to:

Roger E. Olsen
1282 Twenty-Ninth Avenue
San Francisco, CA 94122
USA

Home Phone: (415) 665-8633
Work Phone: (415) 887-7070